



Bill Hinkle
13th District State
Representative

Serving citizens in:

- Kittitas
- Yakima and
- Grant counties

Committees:

- Children and Family Services (*Ranking Republican*)
- Health Care
- Appropriations

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Rep. Bill Hinkle

2005 Legislative Session



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2005 legislative session has **come to a close**. It feels good to be back home and joining many of you again at meetings and community events around the 13th District.

Although some good things did come out of the session this year, for the most part I have to report that it **took our state backward**. One area where the Legislature particularly missed opportunities is in the area of **election reform**. While we did enact some changes, the bills that passed didn't go nearly far enough toward fixing the problems that occurred last fall. You will find more on that topic in this newsletter.

On a positive note, we did pass some good legislation this year, including my bill that gives **all-terrain and off-road vehicle riders** more options for places to ride and another that will take a long, hard look at why the state continues to return children to homes with abusive parents.

Thank you again for the opportunity to represent you in the Legislature. Please give me a call or send an e-mail if I can be of assistance. It is an honor to serve you.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Hinkle".

Rep. Bill Hinkle

Fixing our election system

The governor's election contest is now over. But our quest for having **free and fair elections** in Washington is not.

The 2004 gubernatorial race showed us with agonizing clarity that **our election system needs to be fixed**. Among other major problems, there were **1,678 illegal votes cast** in the 2004 election. The judge in the election contest said the myriad of problems would, "...require more than just constructing new buildings and hiring more staff" to solve.

I agree.

That's why this session I introduced comprehensive legislation that would have stopped many of the problems we saw in this election from occurring again. My election reform bill would have:

- Required those registering to vote to show **proof of U.S. citizenship**.
- Cleaned up the voter rolls by asking voters to **reregister by 2006**. Those who didn't reregister could still vote by provisional ballot;
- Required polling-place voters to show **photo ID**, and required poll workers to compare the picture with the voter and check the signature against the signature on the poll books;
- Required that people register to vote at least **30 days before any election** (current law is 15 days). This would give election workers more time to process new registrations; and
- Allowed **provisional ballots** to cover only races and issues voted on by people statewide, such as president, governor, statewide initiatives, etc.



In addition, I also introduced a bill that would have required all judicial races and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction race to be on the general election ballot.

Unfortunately, the majority party would not give my bills — or any of the other truly meaningful election reform legislation proposed this year — a hearing. Instead, the election-related bills that did pass either took **baby steps forward**, such as keeping a paper trail from electronic voting machines, or **made little difference at all**. Some even made it easier for fraud and abuse to occur. None of them went far enough to restore citizens' confidence in our election system.

In his ruling on the election case, the judge said the court was not in a position to fix the deficiencies in the election process — but the voters of this state are, by demanding their executive and legislative bodies institute remedial measures immediately. **I could not agree more**. That's why I introduced meaningful election reform legislation last session, and again in 2006 will introduce and support legislation to **prevent the problems** we saw last fall, and help citizens **believe in our election system** again.

Good bye, I-601

In 1993, voters passed Initiative 601, a measure that kept state spending in line with growth and required a two-thirds majority vote of the Legislature to raise taxes. It worked: The four state budgets *before* the passage of I-601 grew an average of **17.3 percent**, while those *after* I-601 grew at **half that rate**. Bottom line, Initiative 601 has saved taxpayers more than **\$4 billion** since voters put it in place.

Yet this session, Democrats introduced and passed a bill that **gutted I-601** by allowing the Legislature to raise taxes with a simple-majority vote, rather than a two-thirds majority. The bill also recalculated the state's spending limit to allow higher spending in future budgets.

Throwing away I-601 goes directly **against the will of the voters**. The bill also included an **emergency clause**, which removed the public's right to a referendum on the matter and put the bill into effect immediately.

Initiative 601 was gutted for one reason: to raise taxes in this year's general fund budget. I am committed to putting state government back on a tight budget and reinstating the spending limits taxpayers have told us they want.



Representative **Bill Hinkle** • **13th District**

A backward budget

Every two years legislators must pass a state **operating budget** that pays for things such as public schools, higher education, human services, government and judicial operations, and other services. This budget comes from your tax dollars and other revenue.

Two years ago, under the leadership of Sen. Dino Rossi, the Legislature passed a state budget that closed a \$2.7 billion budget gap (without raising taxes!) and protected funding for our most vulnerable citizens. That contributed to the state's current economic up swing and the additional **\$1.7 billion in new revenue** available this year. In my mind, that should have paved the way for a budget with **no new taxes or fees**.

Unfortunately, the budget we got put off vital state payment obligations, raided dedicated accounts, shifted money around, raised taxes and hiked state spending by 12.4 percent – the biggest jump in 14 years.

The budget also completely abandoned the **Priorities of Government** (POG) process we followed so successfully just two years ago. Using that process, lawmakers identified the most-needed services and funded those first. This year's budget tossed out the POG process and raised taxes on certain groups to fund the state's wish list.

For all these reasons and more, **I voted against this budget**. Next session, as the Legislature considers a mid-biennium budget, I will continue to advocate for a **fiscally responsible spending plan** that will sustain our state for the long term.



Important local legislation

- I am proud to report that my bi-partisan **ATV-ORV bill** passed this year. House Bill 1003 will allow off-road vehicles (ORVs) to operate on nonhighway roads with the landowner's approval and clarifies under what standards ORVs can operate there. I believe this new law will **protect our forests and environment**, because riders will be more inclined to stay on these roads rather than make their own trails. I am also confident it will help **decrease land-use conflicts** between motorized and non-motorized users.
- The Legislature passed a bill I introduced to allow Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 (PERS 1) members to receive **retirement credit** for time spent in **military service**. Public employees are increasingly being called back to active duty toward the end of their careers, making it impossible for them to begin receiving retirement benefits without first being discharged and returning to work. The new law will give these individuals retirement credit for the time they spend in military service and allow them to begin receiving retirement benefits on the timeline they had originally projected.
- I am also pleased to report that the Legislature approved my bill aimed at **protecting children** who are repeatedly put back into abusive homes. Foster kids are under the state's care, and I believe it is our duty to protect them. That's why the measure I introduced would have, as originally written, **limited parental rights** after children were removed from the home three times for abuse or neglect. The Senate amended the bill to first study the issue and take an exhaustive look at when and how we remove children from homes, place them in foster care, terminate parental rights and/or reunite children with parents. The report is due to legislators before the next session. I plan to use it to revisit the issue and, if the report shows a need, introduce legislation that will limit the rights of habitually abusive parents.
- Finally, the Legislature passed and the governor signed my bill requiring the state to begin issuing **reclaimed water permits** to privately owned entities. Reclaimed water is recycled, nonpotable water produced by wastewater treatment systems and is important for irrigation, fire suppression, recreation and other uses. Prior to passage of this legislation, the state would only issue reclaimed water permits to public entities. Now private utilities can open and operate facilities to provide reclaimed water. This is a significant and positive change in our state's water policy, and will be especially helpful for farmers and ranchers in the 13th District and other parts of Central and Eastern Washington.

2005 Legislative Session

How does the Legislature affect your job?

This session the Legislature considered dozens of bills that either will – or would have had – a big impact on employers of all sizes and the people who hold jobs in their companies. They include:

- **Unemployment Insurance (UI) reform.** In 2003, the Legislature enacted major changes to our UI system to make it **more fair and equitable to employers and employees**. This year, the majority party unraveled those measures and passed legislation that took us back to having the highest UI costs in the nation. This sent a message to current and prospective Washington employers that doing business here will **cost you more**. It will also eliminate jobs as employers struggle to pay higher costs. Next session I will advocate for re-adopting these historic reforms.
- **Stopping bad bills.** On the up side, we were able to stop several bills this year that would have meant the loss of thousands of jobs. One would have required employers to purchase private **health insurance** or face a major tax penalty. Another would have forced all employers, regardless of size, to provide workers with **five weeks of paid medical leave** and hold the job open until the employee returns. This would have been financed by a tax on employees, similar to workers' compensation. I will continue to **oppose these types of job-killer bills** next session.



Rep. Hinkle is House Republicans' lead negotiator on issues related to children and families.

How our office can help you

Having difficulty working with a **state agency**, getting a **business license**, bidding on **state projects** or another **state-related issue**? Our office can help – or we can point you in the right direction. Please don't hesitate to contact us at:

Rep. Bill Hinkle

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Finally, if you would like me to come and speak at your child's school or to another group about the Legislature, please give my office a call. We'd be happy to arrange it.